

Meeting Facilitation Techniques

There are several techniques facilitators use for holding effective meetings. Here are some of these techniques to help you create a safe environment for people to speak openly, identify options for issue resolution and come to consensus on plans for moving forward.

Meeting Preparation

- Do your research and know your materials.
- Make sure room set up is conducive to conversation.
- Set ground rules for participation.
- Prepare to record comments on flipcharts:
 - Agenda
 - Ground rules
 - Ideas
 - Parking Lot
 - Action plans
- State objective for meeting.
- Ask participants to hold each other accountable for keeping to ground rules.

Active Listening

- Focus on what the person speaking is trying to communicate.
- Maintain good eye contact, posture and both verbal and nonverbal encouragement.
- Ask open ended questions to help clarify meaning.
- Listen to the entire message before responding.
- Listen for intent and feelings behind the words.
- Summarize and paraphrase to demonstrate understanding.
- Use flipchart to capture verbatim ideas – not interpretations.

Resolving Conflict

- Clarify goals and look for commonalities.
- Focus on ideas and facts, not personalities or behaviors.
- Clarify specific points of agreement and differences.
- Brainstorm several options - resist problem solving too soon.
- Explore advantages and disadvantages for each option.

Dealing with Disruptive Behavior

- Confront disruptive behavior – State the problem factually, name the impact on the team and suggest a different behavior.
 - “John, continually evaluating the group’s ideas while we’re brainstorming slows us down and discourages others from being totally open with their ideas. There will be plenty of time later to analyze the ideas. Please hold your evaluations until then.”
- Use peer pressure to modify disruptive behavior by asking others to respond to a statement or question:

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- “Is there a different perspective on this issue?”
- Use nonverbal cues to discourage disruptive behavior.
- Manage people who dominate the discussion by acknowledging them and immediately including someone else:
 - “I understand your perspective. Alice, what are your thoughts on this issue?”
- Manage people who shut down someone else’s ideas:
 - “George, please hold it a second, Josephine was making a point. When she finishes, I’ll get back to you.”
- Manage people who stray off topic:
 - “You have made an interesting point that I would happy to discuss with you off-line. Let’s get back to our topic for today’s session to identify ways to improve our work environment.”
 - Document the comment in the Parking Lot on your flipchart.